

FEARLESS FESTIVAL 2023
ADDRESS BY
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
PARANAPLE CENTRE, DEVONPORT, FRIDAY 11 AUGUST 2023

Good evening and thank you for inviting me to be one of your hosts to open this 2023 women's forum.

I pay my respects to the traditional and original owners of this land: the palawa people. I acknowledge the contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal community and recognise their enduring culture and continued connection to land, sea and waters.

May I welcome all the young women here from years 10/11/12. I hope that the events over the past two days have inspired you to continue your education and training. Some of you may enter a trade, join the construction industry, police or emergency services, or seek other vocational opportunities. Tonight, you will hear about the wide range of work options from a range of impressive speakers. I hope each of you can take away some ideas from this Fearless Festival for your own career and future.

I thought I would give you three questions to think about.

First, what if you don't know what you want to do after finishing school?

Some of you may already know the work option you want to take. If you are not sure, which is probably quite a few of you, do not worry, you can change your mind, and you can change your career. You can always change your degree or job, do another apprenticeship, or even re-train.

Your main aim should be to find a job that suits you, may I emphasise, that suits you.

In giving this advice, it may surprise you all that I never had a fixed work path plan. I was not one of those people who know from a young age that they want to be a chef, plumber, firefighter, doctor, or engineer. I wanted to go to

university but was not sure what career I wanted. Certainly, I had no great desire to be a lawyer. I did think a little about social work.

I enrolled in Arts in my first year at university because it was a generalist course with subjects of politics, history and psychology. In second year, I enrolled in a combined Arts/Law degree. I liked most of my law subjects. I also enjoyed and was very interested in psychology.

So, I enrolled in and finished the five-year combined degree. I then started Honours in psychology. I thought I wanted to be a psychologist at that point. But, during my Honours course, I decided psychology was not for me.

I withdrew from psychology Honours and the following year I enrolled in the Legal Practice Course. This is a 6-month course and the final practical formal education required to become a lawyer.

I had finally decided a law path was for me at the age of 22.

After completing the Legal Practice Course, I started legal practice with a Hobart law firm, in 1982. When I started working as a lawyer in my twenties, never, in my wildest dreams, did I see myself as a partner in a law firm, a court room barrister, much less a federal magistrate or judge. The idea of becoming a governor certainly never entered my imagination.

I believe that I have been fortunate to be in the right place at the right time throughout my career. Though, I remember and share with you the old saying that “the harder you work the luckier you get.”

Personally, in 2006, I took a risk. I decided to leave my law firm partnership of 14 years and guaranteed income to go to the Tasmanian Independent Bar to work as a barrister. As a barrister, I was self-employed. My income was now dependent on whether solicitors would brief me, that means give me work representing a client in court or giving legal opinions. I wasn't sure how much work I would get from solicitors; however, taking that risk led to a worthwhile and happy time as a barrister. It led to my later appointments as federal magistrate and judge. So, may I suggest you try to be brave and take risks in your career. Find the job you want to do.

2. What do you do if you are underconfident?

I expect many of you will be anxious about your future. Many of you may be underconfident.

May I share with you that throughout my career, I lacked confidence from time to time. I am sure many of us here share that feeling. Many of us can be motivated by a fear of failure, rather than any drive for success.

This is often typical of many girls and women. Research has demonstrated that we are generally less confident than boys and men.

Personally, I tried to overcome my lack of confidence by working hard and always preparing well. Hard work and preparing well will increase your confidence and your courage to speak up. So, my advice is that, if you are underconfident, challenge yourself to speak up and take on harder tasks.

Also, try not to fear failure. If you fear something, try to fight the fear because the more you fight something you fear, the easier it is to overcome your fear. Also, try not to fear not being liked. It is impossible for everyone to like you. So, it is okay if somebody doesn't like you. My advice, finally, is to be yourself and be proud of who you are.

3. What do you do if you fail or have a setback?

Personally, I had setbacks throughout my legal career, and you will probably have setbacks too. Despite setbacks, always keep your head down and continue working hard. My personal motto is never give up. Always keep your dignity when setbacks occur. You can learn from setbacks and do better the next time.

Also, I found it helped throughout my career not to take myself too seriously. I believe a sense of humour is valuable and sometimes we can all laugh at something we do.

In conclusion, may I emphasise that you try not to worry if you are not sure what you want to do right now. Mentors can be very useful in helping you think about and decide on your next steps. You may have found that someone here tonight or over the past two days has inspired you to follow a specific path. It is always good to find someone you trust and can talk with. However, always make up

your own mind. Stand by your own judgment and decisions. Finally, try to focus on what feels right for you. It is your decision.

I look forward to talking with as many of you as I can this evening.

Best wishes to each of you in deciding on your futures.